

### **REMARKS/DISCUSSION OF ISSUES**

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 1-4 and add new claims 8-13.

Accordingly, claims 1-4 and 8-13 are pending in the application.

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for priority and receipt of certified copies of the priority documents.

Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested in view of the following Remarks.

### **CLAIM OBJECTION**

The Office Action objects to claim 1.

Applicants hereby amend claim 1 to clarify that the steel is a stainless maraging steel. Claims 3 and 4 are amended to be consistent with the amended claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants request that the claim objection be withdrawn.

### **35 U.S.C. § 102**

The Office Action rejects claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 over Laurance et al. U.S. patent 5,244,375 ("Laurence").

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-4 are all patentable over Laurance for at least the following reasons.

#### **Claim 1**

Among other things, the method of claim 1 includes plasma-nitriding a stainless maraging steel at a temperature below 500°C.

The Office Action does make any mention of the steel being a stainless maraging steel.

Applicants respectfully submit that Laurence does not disclose plasma-nitriding a stainless maraging steel at a temperature below 500°C.

Accordingly, for at least this reason, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is patentable over Laurance.

Claims 2-4

Claims 2-4 depend from claim 1 and are deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

**NEW CLAIMS 8-13**

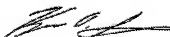
New claims 8-13 depend from claim 1 and are deemed patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

**CONCLUSION**

In view of the foregoing explanations, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and reexamine the present application, allow claims 1-4 and 8-13 and pass the application to issue. In the event that there are any outstanding matters remaining in the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact Kenneth D. Springer (Reg. No. 39,843) at (571) 283.0720 to discuss these matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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